

Have You Seen Me? by Punzie the Platypus

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Summary: Set between S1 and S2. Mike goes to the Chief's office with an appeal to put up 'Have You Seen Me' posters of Eleven all over Hawkins. Hopper, who has Eleven safely in his cabin in the woods, has to take Mike's anguished arguing, unable to help him, and tells him three lies. Mike/Eleven.

Have You Seen Me?

Soli Deo gloria

DISCLAIMER: I do NOT own Stranger Things.

January, 1984

"Hey, Chief," Callahan said, opening the Chief's office door without a knock or an invitation.

Chief Jim Hopper looked up from the reports of accused vandalism on the sides of The Hawk cinema. "For the last time," he said, suppressing the urge to *not* roll his eyes, "please. Learn. To knock."

"Yeah, sure, next time, Chief," Callahan said, "but someone's here, anxious to see you."

Hopper's angry faced slowly faded away to concealed alarm. The last bad string of events began with an anxious mother worried about her son who'd never come home. He'd rather not live that all over again. "Who's here?" Hopper asked.

"Ted Wheeler's kid. One of the friends of Will Byers—" but that was all Callahan was allowed to say before Mike Wheeler slipped past him. Callahan had been standing in the crack of the door, evidently guarding it from a boy intent on invading Chief's office.

"Chief," Mike said eagerly, "I *need* to speak with you. It's a matter of utmost urgency."

Hopper looked at Mike, then at Callahan. Something in the kid's eyes told him that this concerned the Upside Down, and so did not concern Callahan. The less people knew about that, the better. "It's all right, Callahan. You can go. I'll take it from here."

Callahan looked at the Chief with undisguised disbelief. The fact that Chief wouldn't just throw the kid out, but instead gave him some sort of credence by allowing him a private session, *astounded* him. "You—you aren't serious, are you?" Callahan said, not moving. "What could he possibly have to say—"

"Callahan," Chief said, "you like your job, don't you?"

Callahan bobbed his head. "Yeah, I guess."

"You want to keep it, don't you?"

"Yeah. . ."

"Then get out."

Callahan didn't say another word. The look on his face clearly said that he thought Chief was whacked, but he followed orders, closed the door, and even did the respectful thing by not eavesdropping with his ear stuck to the door.

Hopper focused on Mike. "Take a seat, kid," he said, waving a hand to the same chair Joyce Byers sat on the edge of the day after Will went missing. He tapped away the ash of his cigarette (only his second one of the day. Before the Upside Down, he would've been onto his second *pack*) and said after breathing in, "Anything happen? Anyone hurt? Any sign of the Upside Down again? 'Cause this is what you're here about, right? What happened last November?"

"Well, yes, and no. Nobody's hurt or anything, but . . ." Mike gulped and decided to follow through with the thought, even though he knew exactly what Hopper was going to say. "Here." He thrust out a crinkled piece of paper at Hopper.

"What's this?" Hopper said, dropping his dying cigarette into his ashtray to grab the paper with both hands, to study it.

He didn't need to study it. He knew who it was immediately. It was a child's drawing, yes, but it was drawn well. The face drawn was instantly recognizable—at least, to him. Very few people in Hawkins knew this face, the face of a child who could be either a boy or a girl. The shaven head, the intense eyes that betrayed both power and fear, both of having courage and being frightened. It was the face of the girl who was probably mindlessly flipping through channels at his old cabin in the woods this very minute.

His eyes looked up. At the top of the page, it said in block letters, 'Have You Seen Me?'

"Who drew this?" Hopper asked, not looking up at Mike.

"Will did. He's better at drawing than I am."

"Did he do it off of a photo? A picture of her? Does a picture of her exist, Mike?" Hopper looked up then, a little angry, a little alarmed. If a single photo existed of her that those government agents could use, could circulate around so that they could find her—

"No, there isn't any photo of her." Hopper was startled by the sad way Mike said that. "I just described her to Will the best I could. I can picture her in my mind right now, like she's standing in front of me."

Hopper looked back at the picture. Not only was Will a damn fine artist for a twelve-year-old, but Mike had the clearest memory of her. Hopper knew he missed her as much as she missed him; if asked to, Eleven could describe him by memory (she didn't even need to go into her Mind-Space to see him) so that a perfect picture of him could be drawn up. Every line, every curve of the jaw and bend of the nose, would be perfect.

"Chief, we *have* to find her. That's gotta be some way that we can post these without any of those government agents finding her, just so ordinary people right here in Hawkins know that she's missing and can keep an eye out for her, maybe even find her—"

"There's no way, kid," Hopper said, sighing as he set the paper down. He knew from the get-go just how this entire conversation would go down, and it made him want another cigarette.

"You can't give up that easily! We need to be out looking for her, not sitting and twiddling our thumbs and just 'hoping' that she turns up at some point. We didn't do that with Will. If we did, he'd be *dead* right now. She could be in some kind of danger *right now* and we're not doing *anything*—"

Hopper took a rise out of the anger growing in Mike's voice. "We can't put these posters out, kid. Those government agents will seize them and demand to know who put them up. Do you want them visiting your house again, huh? Interrogating your parents?"

"You act like you don't even care about her! She could be lost and scared right now! She *needs* someone to care about her!" Mike whisper-yelled at him. He knew in the back of his mind that these walls were thin, but he was also twelve, and scared, and hurting, and angry, and he really, *really* didn't care.

Hopper's temper boiled. *Didn't care about her; yeah, right.* But Mike didn't know that. "Listen, kid, we can't put these out. Period. It's too risky—"

"How can you say that?" Mike accused. "How can you look at me and say 'we should do nothing?'"

"I'm not saying *that*—" How could this kid's parents put up with him if this was how he argued with adults?

"But that *is* what you're saying. You're saying we shouldn't talk about it, that we shouldn't put out posters like we did for Will. She's lost—she could be in the Upside Down *right now*—"

"Kid, I am doing everything in my power—"

"I call bull! You're not doing anything! We have to look for her! We *have* to find her! She could be *dead* right now!" Here Mike stopped, his last words echoing in the room. They'd been an uncontrolled yell. Neither doubted that Flo and Callahan and Powell could hear them through the thin walls.

Hopper couldn't say anything. He felt completely guilt-ridden. The kid's eyes had tears shining in them, and he had the power to give him the biggest relief of his life. This kid was weighed down with worry, with thoughts of What Ifs and if she was all right, just like Joyce Byers was about her son—and he helped Joyce. He wanted to help Mike, too, but he couldn't say anything. He couldn't help him.

"She's not dead," Hopper finally said, not meeting Mike's eyes.

Mike swallowed, hard. Hopper could hardly stand looking at him. It was hard, seeing a kid cry in front of him. It made him feel guilty and trapped and helpless. "You don't know that," Mike finally said, his voice low.

"Yes, I do."

"No, you don't. We don't know where she is, so we don't even know if she's dead or alive. And we'll keep on not knowing if she's alive or not unless *we find her*," Mike pressed. This last bit was void of argument. It was just a plea. Just a plea from a kid to an adult for some *help, please. Don't write me off. Don't let this go. Don't leave me hanging. Don't abandon her.*

Hopper continued in his slow, quiet voice, the voice he used when Sara was scared and needed a reassuring tone to calm her down. "She's alive. I know that." *I know because she lives with me, but I can't let you know that. I wish I could. But it's safer this way. It sucks, but it's safer this way.* "If she were dead, you'd know. You'd feel it," Hopper said, hand over heart, "in here." He saw his daughter die, but he knew that even if he wasn't in the same room as her, if he'd been a thousand miles away, he would know the moment she flatlined. He would've felt the same awful stabbing sensation in his heart all the same. He looked at Mike head-on. His eyes told Mike that he *knew* what it would be like. "If she died, you would know," he repeated, slower, letting Mike catch the meaning. "She's still alive, and she's somewhere. We're laying low right now because of those government agents. Imagine if someone found her before we did. We can't risk that. I am privately looking for her on my own." The first lie. He knew exactly where she was and what she'd eat for dinner that night. "I will find her." Second lie. Already found her. "I am doing the best I can." Third lie. If he were doing the best he could, he'd have a safe world for her to be in, and Mike Wheeler would know that she was thinking about him every minute of every day. "I just need you to be patient. I need more time to look."

"How much more time? When will you find her?" Mike wanted to know. He'd recovered enough to be able to pretend that he hadn't cried at all.

"Soon," Hopper said slowly.

"Soon," Mike said. He inhaled, finally said, "I can live with soon."

He would have to. He was living with soon just like she was.

"Okay," Hopper said calmly, even while inside he wanted to walk out of that office and speed down the road at 70 MPH smoking a cigarette and letting the engine's VROOOOMMMM fill his ears. He stood up, handed Mike the poster. "Leave it to me, okay, kid? You understand that we can't put these posters up—"

"I don't understand," Mike said. But, he said, resigned, "But I won't put the posters up." He took one long look at the poster before folding it and stuffing it into his coat pocket.

Hopper sighed. It wasn't much to leave the boy. "You just have to trust me on this, okay, Mike?"

Mike looked up. He looked so young and so old. Too young to have to deal with this crap, so old because he *did* have to. "Okay, Chief. I trust you."

Hopper ignored the guilt filling his gut as he said, "Thanks for coming in."

Mike nodded, looked like he wanted to say more, but knew he had run out of arguments, and walked out.

Hopper sighed and rubbed a hand on his face before lighting up another cigarette. He let it burn; he hadn't taken a single draw of it when Callahan appeared in the doorway and said, "So, what'd the kid want to talk to you about?"

Hopper resumed his indifferent air as he looked up from apparently studying the reports and said, "Wanted me to arrest his sister. Apparently she's a public nuisance."

Callahan scoffed. He'd been right. Wasn't that important at *all*. "Kids, am I right, Chief?" he joked.

"Sure," Hopper said in a dismissive tone, leading Callahan to read the hint and leave. Hopper leaned over the reports, but didn't read them. How could he? How could he focus on stupid vandalism when he had two heartbroken kids begging him for information about the other, for help? He was the obstacle stuck between the two. He was a liar because he was the adult in this situation; he was just trying to play

the good cop here. Just trying to keep both these kids safe.

It was safe to say that this job he found himself in *sucked*.

It's so easy to write out Hopper and Mike in a yelling scene. They both bear so much; one's really young and dramatic (understandably) because this is his *whole world* and the other is the adult and has to keep his temper in check and the whole picture in mind. Ohhhhhhh, poor Mike and Hop. :(

Thanks for reading!